

What is claimed is:

1. A method for operating a dishwasher comprising:

(a) loading a dishwasher with items in need of washing;

(b) closing said loaded dishwasher;

(c) steam cleaning said items in a water saturated atmosphere at a pressure of equal to or greater than about 15 psi, a temperature of equal to or greater than about 100°C, a time of equal to or greater than about 15 minutes; and

(d) after said steaming, washing said items in said dishwasher with soap and water to clean said items.

2. In a method for operating a dishwasher where items in a closed dishwasher are washed with soap and water and subsequently dried, the improvement comprising steaming items in a closed dishwasher prior to said items being washed with soap and water, said steam cleaning being conducted in a water saturated atmosphere, at a pressure of equal to or greater than about 15 psi, a temperature of equal to or greater than about 100°C, and a time of equal to or greater than 15 minutes.